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CRAM COURSE NO. 1: MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY

The school year draws rapidly to a close, and it's been a fun year, what with learning the twist, attending public executions, and walking our cheetahs—but are we ready for final exams? Some of us, I fear, are not. Therefore, in these few remaining columns, I propose to forego levity and instead offer a series of cram courses so that we may all be prepared at exam time.

We will start with Modern European History. Strictly defined, Modern European History covers the history of Europe from January 1, 1962, to the present. However, in order to provide employment for more teachers, the course has been moved back to the Age of Pericles, or the Renaissance, as it is jocularly called.

The single most important fact to remember about Modern European History is the emergence of Prussia. As we all know, Prussia was originally called Russia. The "P" was purchased from Persia in 1874 for $24 and Manhattan Island. This later became known as Guy Fawkes Day.

Persia, without a "P" was of course, called Ersia. This so embarrassed the natives that they changed the name of the country to Iran. This led to a rash of name changing. Mesopotamia became Iraq, Schleswig-Holstein became Saxe-Coburg, Bosnia-Herzegovina became Cleveland. There was even talk in stable old England about changing the name of the country, but it was forgotten when the little princes escaped from the Tower and set fire to Pitt, the Elder.

Meanwhile Johannes Gutenberg was quietly inventing the printing press, for which we may all be grateful, believe you me! Why grateful? I'll tell you why grateful. Because without Gutenberg's invention, there would be no printing on cigarette packs. You would not know when you bought cigarettes whether you were getting good Marlboros or some horrid imitation. You would never be sure that you were buying a full-flavored smoke with a pure white filter, a cigarette that lets you settle back and get comfortable—in short, a Marlboro. It is a prospect to chill the bones and turn the blood to sorghum—so if you are ever in Frank-furt am Main, drop in and say thanks to Mr. Gutenberg. He is elderly—408 years old last birthday—but still quite active in his laboratory. In fact, only last Tuesday he invented the German short-haired pointer.

But I digress. Back to Modern European History. Let us turn now to that ever popular favorite, France.

France, as we all know, is divided into several departments. There is the Police Department, the Fire Department, the Gas and Water Department, and the Bureau of Weights and Measures. There is also Madame Pompadour, but that need not concern us because it is a dirty story and is only taught to graduate students.

Finally, let us take up Italy—the newest European nation. Italy did not become a unified state until 1848 when Garibaldi, Cavour, and Victor Emmanuel threw three coins in the Trevi Fountain. This lovely gesture so enchanted all of Europe that William of Orange married Mary Stuart and caused a potato famine in Ireland. This, in turn, resulted in Pitt, the Younger.

He invented the German short-haired pointer

All of this may seem a bit complicated, but be of good cheer. Everything was happily resolved at the Congress of Vienna where Metternich traded Parma to Tallyrand for Mad Ludwig of Bavaria. Then everybody waltzed till dawn and then, tired, but content, they started the Thirty Years War.

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